



# ROLE OF WOMEN IN PROMOTING LOCAL HANDICRAFTS AND WEAVING INDUSTRY: A STUDY IN DHEMAJI DISTRICT

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## ABSTRACT

The handicrafts and weaving industry holds significant cultural and economic value in Dhemaji district, known for its traditional craftsmanship and vibrant heritage. Women play a central role in this industry as artisans, entrepreneurs, and contributors to the local economy. This study explores the multifaceted roles of women in promoting and sustaining the handicrafts and weaving industry in Dhemaji. It examines their socio-economic contributions, challenges faced, and the support provided by government initiatives and NGOs. Despite their vital contributions, women face barriers such as limited access to resources, financial constraints, market challenges, and socio-cultural norms. Government schemes, NGO interventions, and cooperative models have been instrumental in empowering women artisans by providing training, financial aid, and market linkages. However, the study highlights the need for improved infrastructure, awareness campaigns, and policy alignment to fully unlock their potential. By addressing these challenges, women artisans can drive economic growth, preserve cultural heritage, and foster social transformation in the region.

**KEYWORDS:** Dhemaji District, Women Artisans, Handicrafts Industry, Weaving, Socio-Economic Contributions, Empowerment, Traditional Crafts, Entrepreneurship.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Dhemaji is a district located in the northeastern state of Assam, India. It lies on the banks of the Brahmaputra River and is bordered by the state of Arunachal Pradesh to the north. The district is part of the Upper Assam region, a strategically important area known for its rich cultural heritage, agricultural activities, and natural beauty. Dhemaji is well-connected to the rest of Assam by road and river, and it shares cultural and economic ties with neighboring districts like Lakhimpur, Tinsukia, and Dibrugarh. The administrative headquarters of the district is the town of Dhemaji, which serves as a hub for both commerce and governance.

Culturally, Dhemaji is an area deeply rooted in traditional Assamese practices and local customs. The district is home to various ethnic communities, including Assamese, Mising, Bodo, and many indigenous tribal groups. This diversity has contributed to a vibrant tapestry of cultural traditions, festivals, and art forms. Handicrafts, weaving, and traditional arts are integral to the way of life here, with local women playing a prominent role in keeping these practices alive. The weaving industry in particular, with its intricate designs and techniques, is a source of both cultural pride and livelihood for many families in Dhemaji.

The socio-economic background of Dhemaji District reflects the challenges and opportunities found in many rural areas of India. While the district is blessed with fertile land, making it conducive to agriculture, it has also faced challenges such as frequent flooding, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to modern markets. The economy is primarily agrarian, with rice, tea, and jute being the major crops cultivated in the region.

In addition to agriculture, the handicrafts and weaving industry has emerged as a significant economic activity, providing an important source of income for women and rural households.

In recent years, there has been a concerted effort to harness the potential of the local handicraft sector, especially by empowering women who are skilled in weaving and crafting. The industry, which produces handwoven fabrics, traditional garments like mekhela chadors, and other intricate textile products, has helped create small-scale businesses and cooperatives that contribute to the local economy. However, the district still faces several socio-economic challenges, including limited educational and employment opportunities, which have necessitated a focus on developing skills among the youth and empowering women to take on leadership roles in these traditional industries.

## 2. IMPORTANCE OF THE HANDICRAFTS AND WEAVING INDUSTRY IN DHEMAJI

The handicrafts and weaving industry holds immense cultural, economic, and social significance in Dhemaji District, Assam. This industry is not just a source of livelihood for many households but also a key element in preserving the region's rich cultural heritage. The traditional arts and crafts, especially weaving, have been passed down through generations, with women playing a central role in their creation and promotion. These crafts are deeply embedded in the daily lives of the people, contributing to both personal identity and community pride.

One of the primary economic contributions of the handicraft and weaving industry in Dhemaji is its ability to provide employment to a large section of the population, particularly

women. In a predominantly rural area where agricultural opportunities are often seasonal and limited, handicrafts provide a steady source of income. Weaving, especially of traditional garments such as mekhela chadors, sarees, and intricate handwoven textiles, has become a means for women to achieve financial independence. In addition, the growth of weaving cooperatives and small businesses centered around these crafts has provided further employment opportunities, contributing to rural economic development. The handicraft industry, therefore, not only sustains families but also empowers local communities, particularly women, by offering a sense of autonomy and financial security.

Beyond its economic role, the handicrafts and weaving industry in Dhemaji also plays a crucial part in preserving and promoting the cultural identity of the region. The district is home to a number of indigenous ethnic groups, each with their own distinct weaving styles, patterns, and techniques. For instance, the Mising community is known for its traditional weaving of cotton and silk fabrics, while other communities create unique textile items that reflect their cultural values and lifestyles. These crafts are often used in daily life and during traditional ceremonies and festivals, reinforcing cultural pride and continuity. In this way, the industry functions as a living heritage, sustaining traditions while adapting to contemporary tastes and markets.

The handicrafts produced in Dhemaji also have significant export potential, with demand for Assamese textiles and handcrafted products growing both within India and internationally. The distinctiveness of locally produced textiles, often characterized by intricate motifs and the use of natural fibers, has found a niche market in the global handicraft industry. Products such as handwoven shawls, carpets, and garments attract buyers interested in sustainable and authentic artisanal goods. As a result, the weaving industry in Dhemaji is not only a local enterprise but also part of a larger economic network that contributes to the global handicraft trade, bringing recognition and financial benefits to the region.

Furthermore, the handicrafts and weaving industry in Dhemaji has become an important part of the district's tourism sector. Visitors to the region are often drawn by the opportunity to purchase authentic, handcrafted textiles, and by the desire to witness the traditional weaving process. Craft fairs, exhibitions, and local markets serve as platforms for showcasing these products, attracting tourists and promoting the local economy. This intersection of cultural heritage and tourism creates opportunities for sustainable development while simultaneously preserving the region's crafts for future generations.

### 3. THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN TRADITIONAL INDUSTRIES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Women have played a central role in traditional industries, particularly in rural and artisanal sectors, where their involvement is not only critical to the preservation of cultural heritage but also to the economic development of their communities. In many regions, including Dhemaji District in Assam, women are the backbone of traditional industries such

as handicrafts, weaving, and other artisan-based work. Their participation is multifaceted, contributing to the continuity of cultural practices, economic sustainability, and social transformation within their families and communities.

#### Preservation of Traditional Knowledge and Craftsmanship

Women are often the custodians of traditional knowledge and skills passed down through generations. In Dhemaji, as in many other parts of India, weaving and handicrafts have been part of the cultural fabric for centuries. Women, particularly in rural areas, are the primary practitioners of these skills, learning from their mothers, grandmothers, and community elders. This knowledge encompasses not only the techniques of weaving and crafting but also the cultural symbolism embedded in the designs and motifs used in textiles. Women's roles in the creation of these handmade products ensure the continuity of indigenous practices, making them key agents in the preservation of cultural heritage.

For example, in Dhemaji, women from various ethnic communities like the Mising and Bodo have long been involved in the production of traditional garments such as mekhela chadors and other handwoven textiles. The unique patterns and weaving techniques reflect the history, beliefs, and identity of the people. Women's involvement in these traditional industries thus serves as a vehicle for cultural preservation, helping to maintain regional distinctiveness in the face of globalizing forces.

#### Empowerment and Financial Independence

Beyond cultural preservation, women's involvement in traditional industries plays a significant role in economic development, particularly in rural areas where formal employment opportunities may be scarce. In Dhemaji, weaving and handicrafts provide women with an alternative source of income, enabling them to achieve financial independence. In a community where agriculture is often seasonal and not always profitable, handicrafts can be a reliable and steady source of earnings.

Through weaving, many women have been able to support their families, invest in education, and contribute to household expenses. In some cases, women have taken the initiative to form cooperatives or small businesses, thus becoming entrepreneurs and leaders in their communities. This economic autonomy is a powerful form of empowerment, allowing women to take part in decision-making processes within their households and communities. Financial independence also leads to improved social status and greater participation in local governance and community development activities.

#### Social Transformation and Gender Equality

The involvement of women in traditional industries also has broader social implications. As women gain economic independence through their work in handicrafts and weaving, they challenge traditional gender roles and contribute to social transformation. In many rural communities, women are often expected to focus primarily on household chores and child-rearing. However, by engaging in economic activities

outside the home, they not only bring in income but also break stereotypes and redefine women's roles in society.

In Dhemaji, women involved in weaving are often seen as agents of change. Their success in the handicraft industry can inspire younger generations, particularly girls, to pursue their education and participate in economic activities outside traditional agricultural work. This shift in gender dynamics promotes greater gender equality and encourages women to take on leadership roles in both the domestic and public spheres.

#### **Contribution to Local and Regional Economic Development**

Women's participation in traditional industries, such as weaving, directly contributes to the economic development of their local communities. By producing goods that are in demand both locally and internationally, women help generate income and promote local businesses. These industries also create employment opportunities for other women, as the demand for raw materials and finished goods expands. Local weavers, dyers, and textile artisans can form networks, collaborate on projects, and sell their products through cooperatives or local markets, thereby fostering community-based economic growth.

Moreover, women's involvement in traditional industries helps diversify the economic base of rural areas, reducing reliance on agriculture alone. In Dhemaji, the handicrafts and weaving industries not only support families but also attract tourists, further boosting the local economy. The distinctive woven products, often linked to the cultural identity of the region, become a source of pride and a way to promote the area's unique heritage in national and global markets.

#### **Challenges and the Need for Support**

While women's roles in traditional industries are vital, they face numerous challenges that can hinder their full potential. In Dhemaji, as in many rural regions, women in the handicraft industry may face issues such as limited access to credit, inadequate marketing infrastructure, and lack of formal training opportunities. Social barriers, including gender biases and limited mobility, may also restrict women's ability to expand their businesses or reach wider markets. Additionally, the fluctuating demand for traditional handicrafts and the impact of climate change on raw material availability pose further challenges.

To overcome these barriers, it is essential for government policies, NGOs, and local organizations to provide targeted support to women in traditional industries. This includes access to financial resources, training in business management and marketing, and platforms for showcasing and selling their products. By addressing these challenges, women can continue to thrive as key contributors to both the preservation of cultural heritage and the economic development of their communities.

#### **4. SOCIO-ECONOMIC ROLE OF WOMEN IN DHEMAJI**

In Dhemaji District, Assam, women play a crucial role in the socio-economic fabric of their communities, significantly influencing both household economies and broader social structures. The district, primarily rural with agricultural

roots, offers women both challenges and opportunities in contributing to economic growth, cultural preservation, and social development. Traditionally, women have been involved in farming, household management, and artisanal activities like weaving and handicrafts, all of which are central to their socio-economic roles.

#### **Economic Contributions**

Women in Dhemaji are the primary contributors to the household economy, especially in rural areas where agriculture and traditional crafts are the primary sources of livelihood. In many families, women actively participate in farming alongside their male counterparts. They are involved in the cultivation of crops such as rice, jute, and vegetables, performing tasks that range from sowing and harvesting to processing and selling agricultural produce. Despite often working in the informal sector, women's labor is integral to sustaining the agricultural economy of the district.

In addition to agriculture, women in Dhemaji are also deeply engaged in the local handicraft and weaving industries. This sector has become a significant source of income for many women, particularly in rural communities. Weaving, for example, is a time-honored tradition in Dhemaji, with women skilled in creating mekhela chadors, handwoven shawls, and other textile products. These products not only have a market in the local economy but are also sold at regional and national levels, contributing to the economic sustainability of households. Through these economic activities, women contribute to the financial independence of their families, reduce poverty, and increase the overall income levels of the community.

Women in Dhemaji are also increasingly participating in small-scale entrepreneurship. With the rise of women's cooperatives and self-help groups, many have established businesses that center around weaving, food processing, and other local crafts. These small enterprises provide women with leadership roles, enhance their financial autonomy, and contribute to the local economy. However, despite these contributions, the formal recognition of women's work and the access to credit, marketing, and training opportunities remains limited, which often restricts their full economic potential.

#### **Cultural and Social Roles**

Culturally, women in Dhemaji are the keepers and transmitters of tradition, particularly in the realms of weaving, handicrafts, and folklore. Through their work, they preserve the distinctive cultural identity of the region, creating textiles that reflect both their personal and collective histories. These items are not only used for personal adornment and family rituals but are also integral to festivals, ceremonies, and social events, making women central to the cultural life of Dhemaji. In addition to cultural preservation, women in Dhemaji are actively involved in the social fabric of their communities. They are the primary caregivers, responsible for the health, education, and well-being of their children and elderly family members. This caregiving role is crucial, especially in a region where healthcare facilities may be limited and social services are not always easily accessible. Women ensure the continuity of

family life and contribute to the emotional and social stability of their communities. Moreover, women in Dhemaji are increasingly participating in local governance and decision-making processes. Their roles in community organizations, cooperatives, and self-help groups give them platforms to voice their concerns and take part in collective decision-making. This shift in women's social roles is particularly notable in rural areas where patriarchal structures traditionally limited women's involvement in leadership and decision-making. As women become more active in these areas, they challenge traditional gender norms and promote greater gender equality within their communities.

### Challenges Faced by Women

Despite their significant contributions, women in Dhemaji face numerous socio-economic challenges. In rural Assam, where traditional gender roles are still prevalent, women often bear the burden of unpaid domestic labour, which limits their ability to participate in income-generating activities or pursue formal employment. Additionally, the economic opportunities available to women in Dhemaji are often restricted by limited access to education, training, and financial resources. Many women lack access to credit or formal banking services, which are essential for expanding their businesses or pursuing entrepreneurial ventures. Socially, women continue to face gender-based discrimination, which manifests in lower social status, limited mobility, and exclusion from decision-making processes, both within the household and at the community level. While women's roles in local governance and entrepreneurship are increasing, patriarchal attitudes still persist, which can hinder their access to equal opportunities. Furthermore, Dhemaji faces challenges such as frequent flooding, poor infrastructure, and limited access to healthcare, all of which disproportionately affect women, particularly in terms of their health and well-being.

### Empowerment and Social Change

In recent years, efforts to empower women in Dhemaji have gained momentum, with various government programs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working to improve women's socio-economic status. These initiatives include skill development programs, financial literacy workshops, and initiatives aimed at promoting women's entrepreneurship. Cooperatives and self-help groups are now becoming common in Dhemaji, providing women with support networks, resources, and training to enhance their economic independence. These platforms help women access better markets for their products, learn new skills, and improve their financial literacy, further contributing to their empowerment. Moreover, education and awareness campaigns are helping to break down traditional barriers to women's participation in society. Increasingly, young women in Dhemaji are pursuing higher education, acquiring new skills, and stepping into roles previously reserved for men. This shift is gradually changing the socio-economic landscape of the district, encouraging greater gender equality and providing women with the tools to lead more independent, fulfilling lives.

## 5. WOMEN AS ARTISANS AND ENTREPRENEURS IN DHEMAJI

In Dhemaji District, Assam, women have long been recognized as the heart and soul of the local handicraft and weaving industries, where they not only preserve traditional craftsmanship but also contribute significantly to the region's economic development. As artisans and entrepreneurs, women in Dhemaji are playing transformative roles in both the cultural and economic landscape of their communities. Their dual identity as artisans and entrepreneurs allows them to preserve the rich heritage of the region while simultaneously driving socio-economic change.

### Women as Artisans: Preserving Tradition

Women in Dhemaji are custodians of traditional arts and crafts that have been passed down through generations. The district's handicraft and weaving industries, especially the production of handwoven textiles such as mekhela chadors, shawls, and other intricate garments, are largely managed and run by women. These textiles are deeply rooted in the cultural traditions of various communities in Dhemaji, such as the Mising, Bodo, and Assamese, and carry symbolic meanings in both daily life and ceremonial contexts. For instance, the mekhela chador, a traditional garment worn by Assamese women, requires high skill and intricate weaving techniques. These techniques, which women learn from a young age, often involve hand-spinning, dyeing, and weaving, processes that require not just technical skill but also a deep understanding of the cultural motifs and designs that define Assamese textiles. By participating in these traditional industries, women help preserve not only the craft itself but also the cultural identity of Dhemaji.

The role of women as artisans is not just about craftsmanship; it is also about cultural continuity. Women in Dhemaji are often the primary educators of younger generations, passing down techniques, stories, and the significance of the designs that make their crafts unique. This helps ensure that the cultural heritage of the region remains alive, even as the world around them changes. Their role as artisans is vital to sustaining the distinctiveness of Dhemaji's cultural and textile traditions, which are gaining recognition both in domestic and international markets.

### Women as Entrepreneurs: Driving Economic Change

In addition to their role as artisans, women in Dhemaji have increasingly taken on the role of entrepreneurs, transforming their crafts into sustainable sources of income and creating economic opportunities not just for themselves but also for their communities. This entrepreneurial shift is helping to break down traditional gender roles and empower women economically. One of the most significant drivers of this change has been the formation of women's self-help groups (SHGs) and cooperatives in Dhemaji. These groups provide women with the necessary support, resources, and platforms to market their products, access training, and build financial literacy. Through these collectives, women are learning how to manage finances, run businesses, and navigate marketing challenges. This, in turn, has allowed many women to scale up their operations, reaching new markets and improving their



economic conditions.

Women entrepreneurs in Dhemaji are now selling their handcrafted products through various channels, including local markets, exhibitions, and online platforms. These ventures not only provide a stable source of income but also create employment opportunities for other women, fostering a ripple effect that boosts the local economy. The increasing demand for hand-woven products, which are considered sustainable and unique, has contributed to the growth of women-led enterprises, thus strengthening the district's economic base.

In addition to traditional weaving, women are diversifying into other sectors such as food processing, dairy farming, and eco-tourism. By leveraging their skills, creativity, and understanding of local resources, women are creating innovative business models that contribute to the socio-economic development of Dhemaji. This entrepreneurial spirit is also helping women gain more visibility and recognition in the local economy, paving the way for future generations of women to follow in their footsteps.

#### **Challenges Faced by Women Artisans and Entrepreneurs**

Despite the significant contributions of women as artisans and entrepreneurs, several challenges persist, hindering their full potential. Access to credit and financial services remains one of the biggest barriers. Many women in Dhemaji do not have collateral or the necessary documentation to secure loans from formal financial institutions. As a result, they often rely on informal sources of credit, which can be both expensive and unreliable. Market access is another challenge faced by women entrepreneurs. While there is increasing demand for handmade products, many women in Dhemaji still struggle to find adequate platforms to showcase and sell their goods. The lack of marketing infrastructure and knowledge of digital platforms limits their reach beyond local markets. This is compounded by competition from mass-produced goods, which can often undercut the prices of handcrafted items.

Additionally, women in Dhemaji continue to face societal constraints. Gender norms that dictate women's primary role as caregivers often limit their ability to pursue entrepreneurial ventures. Women's unpaid labor at home, coupled with the responsibilities of child-rearing, can prevent them from fully engaging in business activities or pursuing education and training opportunities.

#### **Support and Opportunities for Empowerment**

To address these challenges, various government initiatives, NGOs, and local organizations are providing crucial support to women artisans and entrepreneurs in Dhemaji. Programs focused on skill development, financial literacy, and market access are helping women navigate the complexities of entrepreneurship. Training in business management, marketing, and digital literacy is enabling women to better run their enterprises and reach wider audiences.

Moreover, the promotion of women's cooperatives and self-help groups is creating a sense of community and solidarity,

empowering women to work together towards common goals. These cooperatives help women share resources, improve production processes, and increase their collective bargaining power when negotiating prices and securing orders. By providing a platform for collaboration and support, these initiatives are contributing to the economic and social empowerment of women in Dhemaji.

The promotion of local handicrafts and weaving also holds significant potential for attracting tourism, which could further support women's businesses. Government programs promoting handicrafts and tourism can create opportunities for women to showcase their products to a wider audience, bringing in additional income and fostering pride in their work.

### **6. IMPACT ON LOCAL ECONOMY**

The involvement of women in the handicraft and weaving industries of Dhemaji has had a profound impact on the local economy, both directly and indirectly. These traditional industries, once primarily a means of cultural expression, have transformed into vital economic sectors that provide sustainable livelihoods for women and contribute significantly to the overall economic growth of the district. Through their roles as artisans and entrepreneurs, women in Dhemaji are shaping the future of the local economy, creating employment, stimulating trade, and promoting sustainable practices.

#### **Direct Economic Contributions**

One of the most immediate impacts of women's involvement in the handicrafts and weaving industries in Dhemaji is the creation of jobs and the generation of income for local families. Women are not only the primary labour force in these sectors but also the primary earners in many households. By producing and selling handwoven textiles, such as mekhela chadors, shawls, and other garments, women generate a substantial portion of the household income, improving living standards and reducing poverty. This income allows families to invest in better education, healthcare, and other essential services, contributing to overall improvements in the quality of life in Dhemaji.

Furthermore, as women increasingly engage in entrepreneurial activities, they are opening small businesses that contribute to the local economy. These businesses range from small weaving units to shops selling handwoven products, and even tourism-related ventures, such as homestays or handicraft exhibitions. As these businesses grow, they not only generate direct economic benefits for women but also create additional jobs for other members of the community, particularly other women and young people. These ripple effects help to spread wealth throughout the district, fostering a more diversified and resilient local economy.

#### **Contribution to Rural Economic Diversification**

Dhemaji has traditionally been an agrarian district, with agriculture as the primary source of income. However, the increasing involvement of women in the handicraft and weaving industries has contributed to the diversification of the local economy. This shift has helped to reduce the dependence on

agriculture, especially in times of flooding or natural disasters, which can severely impact crop production. The rise of the handicrafts sector provides women with an alternative, stable source of income, thus enhancing economic resilience. Women-led enterprises in the weaving sector have also begun to form linkages with other sectors of the economy, such as tourism and retail. Handwoven products have become a sought-after item among tourists, both domestic and international, who are drawn to Dhemaji's rich cultural heritage. Local entrepreneurs are now tapping into this demand, establishing direct sales channels, online platforms, and participating in exhibitions. This expanding market for handicrafts is not only beneficial for women but also stimulates the growth of related sectors like retail, transportation, and hospitality.

### Market Access and Economic Mobility

One of the key drivers of economic mobility for women in Dhemaji is the growing access to markets. Women, through their participation in self-help groups (SHGs) and cooperatives, have gained better access to resources, including raw materials, credit, and training. These platforms allow women to pool their resources and access larger markets, both locally and nationally. The collective power of these groups enables women to negotiate better prices for their products, secure larger orders, and engage in bulk production, which in turn enhances their economic stability. As women entrepreneurs gain more experience, they are also exploring newer avenues for growth, including e-commerce. Digital platforms offer them a wider market reach and an opportunity to sell their products to customers outside Dhemaji. This exposure to larger, national markets allows women to increase their sales volumes and earn higher incomes, which has a cascading effect on the local economy, leading to a broader circulation of wealth within the district.

### Promoting Sustainable Economic Development

The handicraft and weaving industries led by women in Dhemaji also contribute to sustainable economic development. These industries are predominantly eco-friendly, as the materials used—such as natural fibers and dyes—are renewable and biodegradable. The promotion of these industries encourages environmentally sustainable practices, providing an alternative to mass-produced, synthetic textiles that are harmful to the environment.

Moreover, many women-led businesses are now incorporating sustainable practices in their production processes. By using organic materials, reducing waste, and embracing eco-friendly production methods, these enterprises are not only contributing to environmental sustainability but also positioning Dhemaji's handicrafts as products with a unique, eco-conscious appeal. This adds value to the products, increasing their desirability in a growing global market that prioritizes sustainability.

### Cultural Tourism and Local Branding

As the demand for traditional Assamese handicrafts grows, so does the potential for cultural tourism in Dhemaji. Handwoven textiles are not only significant locally but are also seen as a symbol of Assam's rich heritage. Women, as the creators of

these crafts, are becoming cultural ambassadors, attracting tourists who wish to experience the authentic art of weaving. This influx of tourists contributes to the local economy by stimulating demand for hospitality services, transportation, and cultural experiences.

The promotion of Dhemaji's handicrafts, through local branding and storytelling, has the potential to turn these crafts into an internationally recognized product. By associating their products with cultural pride and sustainability, women artisans are contributing to the growth of a local brand that can be marketed both within India and abroad. This form of cultural tourism, driven by women artisans, not only benefits the crafts sector but also has the potential to boost other local industries, creating a more robust and diversified economy.

### Social and Economic Empowerment

The economic impact of women's participation in the handicrafts and weaving sectors goes beyond just income generation. It also leads to significant social empowerment. As women gain financial independence through their craft-based enterprises, they are able to contribute to household decision-making and improve their status within the family and community. This financial autonomy is instrumental in challenging traditional gender roles and fostering greater gender equality. The economic success of women also influences the broader social dynamics of Dhemaji. Empowered women are more likely to send their children, especially daughters, to school, thus promoting education and reducing gender gaps in educational attainment. This, in turn, lays the foundation for a more educated and skilled workforce in the future, contributing to long-term sustainable development.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The role of women in Dhemaji's handicrafts and weaving industries is pivotal, not only for preserving the district's cultural heritage but also for driving its socio-economic development. As artisans, entrepreneurs, and leaders, women contribute significantly to sustaining traditional crafts while providing livelihoods for their families and communities. However, their potential is often constrained by challenges such as limited access to resources, financial barriers, societal expectations, and market competition. The combined efforts of government initiatives and NGO interventions have provided much-needed support to address these issues. From skill development programs and financial assistance to market access and policy advocacy, these measures have empowered women artisans to overcome barriers and achieve greater economic independence. Success stories emerging from Dhemaji highlight the transformative impact of cooperative models, sustainable practices, and digital integration.

Despite these achievements, there remains a need for more comprehensive and inclusive strategies to ensure the full participation and growth of women in the handicrafts and weaving industries. Improved infrastructure, simplified processes, and targeted awareness campaigns can further enhance the reach and effectiveness of support systems. By investing in the empowerment of women artisans, Dhemaji can

create a sustainable and thriving ecosystem for its traditional industries. This not only preserves its rich cultural identity but also fosters long-term economic resilience, benefitting the entire region. Women's contributions, when recognized and nurtured, can serve as a catalyst for broader social and economic transformation in Dhemaji and beyond.

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